

Trail of the Ancients

10,000 Years of Footsteps



6 Days/5 Nights

Gateway City: Moab, Utah



This story begins nearly 65 million years ago, when dinosaurs roamed the earth and the Colorado Plateau was still a dry seabed as far as the eye could see. Over time, wind and rain eroded the land and left layers of colorful sandstone formations in their wake, turning rock into fins, and fins into arches, gullies, and caves. Then, around 10,000 BCE, Paleolithic hunter-gatherers became the earliest inhabitants of this fascinating region. They gave way to the Ancestral Puebloans, or Anasazi, who, along with the Ute, Apache, and Navajo Indians, left remarkable remnants of their culture and civilization. Ranchers, cowboys, miners, and religious pioneers arrived in the mid-1800's, establishing permanent settlements and developing the cities that still populate the area to this day. The Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway, a looping road that winds over 400 miles/644km throughout Utah, Colorado, and Arizona, connects the prehistoric to the modern while highlighting the spectacular scenery of the Four Corners region. Travel through time on the only national scenic byway appointed due to its archeological significance and explore remote cultural and historic sites while traversing a diverse landscape that is wildly beautiful and beautifully wild. From the sunbaked desert of northeast Arizona to the dramatic canyons of southwest Colorado and the snow-capped mountains and red rock country of southeast Utah, the Trail of the



Ancients will lead you on a journey of discovery through the archeological heartland of America, with stops at adventure and understanding along the way.

TOURING THE BYWAY

We recommend arriving in Moab and traveling to Monticello to start your journey along the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway. Experience life as it used to be lived at the Monticello Frontier Museum, ponder the largest collection of petroglyphs in the country at the Newspaper Rock Historical Monument, and from a perch high above the Abajo Mountains, discover sweeping views the Needles District of nearby Canyonlands National Park before staying in a converted flour mill for the evening.

On Day Two, you'll travel to Blanding, a city with seemingly endless opportunities to view the world through the eyes of past eras. Learn about the Ancestral Puebloans at the Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum, understand the cultures that came together in the area at the Nations of the Four Corners Cultural Center, see what life was like for the region's dinosaurs at The Dinosaur Museum, and explore Anasazi cliff dwellings at the Butler Wash Ruins. Get ready for some serious scenery on Day Three as the Byway takes you to Natural Bridges National

Monument, the panoramic views from Muley Point Overlook and Goosenecks State Park, and the towering monoliths of Valley of the Gods. Relax in an outdoor hot tub before tucking in for the night in the tiny village of Mexican Hat.

The views continue on Day Four as you drive south on Route 163 from Mexican Hat. Recognize those peaks in the distance? This road is where Forrest Gump ended his famous cross-country run! After pausing for the obligatory picture, spend the day at Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park. Join a guided Jeep tour, try your hand at a horseback ride, or enjoy a 17 mile/27km looped driving route to see the magnificent sandstone columns that provided the backdrop to some of the most famous Western movies in cinematic history. Keep the red rocks in sight as you watch the sunset from Goulding's Lodge, a desert inn with mesmerizing views of the valley.

On Day Five the Trail of the Ancients leads you into Arizona for three memorable rock formations near the town of Kayenta – Agathla Peak on Route 163 and Church Rock and Baby Rocks Mesa on Route 160. Go north on Route 191 to reach Bluff, a former pioneer settlement in Utah that is also home to the Bluff Fort Historic Site and the Sand Island Petroglyphs. Gather around the outdoor fire pit at the Bluff Dwellings Resort and Spa, your accommodations for the evening.



To begin Day Six, stay on Route 162 and pass through the tiny town of Montezuma Creek on your way to Four Corners Monument Navajo Tribal Park, where you'll defy logic and stand in four states at once – Arizona, Utah, Colorado, and New Mexico. Then cap off your journey with a stop at Hovenweep National Monument, home to six protected and ancestral Puebloan villages.

From there, we wish you a safe passage if you're continuing your journey on the Colorado portion of the Trail of the Ancients Scenic Byway, or a safe and pleasant journey home.



DAY ONE



Monticello

Known as the “land above the canyons,” Monticello’s unique position on the eastern slope of Utah’s Abajo Mountains grants visitors and locals alike some of the most beautiful scenic overlooks in the world. The city was settled by Mormon pioneers in 1887 and named Monticello in honor of Thomas Jefferson’s estate. Thanks to its 7,000 foot/2133 meter elevation atop the Colorado Plateau, summers in Monticello are pleasant and dry and outdoor adventure activities like golf, hiking, fishing, ATV/OHV, and motocross biking are incredibly popular.

Monticello Frontier Museum

Take a passage through time and observe frontier life as it was lived on the edge of the canyons over 100 years ago at the Frontier Museum, housed in a charming century-old post & beam barn. Exhibits include Native American and pioneer artifacts, vintage clothing, early appliances, prehistoric relics, and remains from the Home of Truth.

232 S Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-587-3401 Daily 9AM-6PM.

Canyon Country Discovery Center

Learn about the history of the Colorado Plateau through hands-on, family-friendly, experiential STEAM exhibits. Most of the Discovery Center's learning stations are sized for even the tiniest of hands, so kids of all ages can actively experiment with tangible objects designed to teach about local culture, land use and energy, geology, astronomy, and native plants and animal ecology. An indoor bouldering wall, outdoor nature trails, and a telescope observatory are also available for visitors.

1117 N Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-587-2156 Tu-Sa 10AM-4PM, Adults \$10.

Newspaper Rock State Historical Monument

As one of the largest collections of petroglyphs in the country, prepare to be amazed as you stand at the base of the 200-square-foot sandstone cliff and attempt to decipher what the markings were trying to communicate. Could they be legends of hard-fought battles, notes on hunting patterns and seasons, creation myths, or something else entirely? We may never know for sure, but the 650 etchings and designs were produced over 2,000 years ago by members of the Fremont, Ute, and Anasazi Native American tribes who carefully scratched through the black rock to "tell stories" on the lighter rock beneath.

Located along Utah 221, 28 miles/45km northwest of Monticello.



Needles Overlook

From a perch of 1,600 feet/480 meters above Canyonlands National Park, discover a landscape so dramatic you might think you're on another planet. As the collective name for the hundreds of colorful sandstone spires that shoot from the desert floor, The Needles District is one of the most striking areas of the rugged park. The Needles Overlook provides a nearly 360-degree view of these jagged peaks and is often uncrowded, giving you the perfect opportunity to experience true canyon tranquility.

Located along Utah 133, 22 miles/35.4km west of Utah 191.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Grist Mill Inn 64 S 300 E, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-587-2597 Quaint accommodations in a former 1933 flour mill with complimentary satellite TV and Wi-Fi, and an onsite common room, library nook, and full restaurant, The Granary Bar & Grill.

Destination Distinctive Dining

High Desert Cafe 516 N Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-210-4441 Enjoy breakfast, lunch, and dinner on an eclectic and colorful outdoor patio.

Doug's BBQ 496 N Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-210-4441 Serving the best bar-b-q in the Four Corners Region!

Thatzza Pizza 201 S Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-587-9111 Offering traditional and specialty pizzas, calzones, salads, and pastas in a family-friendly environment.

Destination Distinctive Shopping

Jackalope Trading Company 188 S Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-459-1107 Gift shop with artisan crafted jewelry, home goods, local honey and chocolate, and other fine gifts.

Unique Creations & Gifts 108 S Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-587-3355 Local gift shop featuring home decor, clothing, jewelry, scrapbook supplies, and fresh cut flowers and plants.

Abajo Trading Post 164 N Main St, Monticello, UT 84535, 435-587-2339 Navajo and Zuni jewelry and pottery, weavings, antiques, vintage items, and other arts and crafts.

DAY TWO

Blanding

Originally called Grayson, this town in southeastern Utah changed its name to Blanding in 1914 when wealthy easterner Thomas W. Bicknell offered a 1,000-book library to any city that would adopt his name. Two towns took him up on the offer, so he split the library prize in half and named Blanding after his wife's maiden name. The city is now a gateway to a myriad of outdoor recreation areas and is also located near the Navajo and White Mesa Ute Native American reservations.

Edge of the Cedars State Park Museum

Home to the largest collection of Ancestral Puebloan pottery in the Four Corners Region, items on view at this popular museum include a macaw feather sash from the year 1150 and the Horse Rock basket collection. Rock art panel reproductions and a sculptural and accurate recreation of an ancient Pueblo calendar can be found throughout the building, and an actual Chacoan Great House kiva, accessed via a ladder, is behind the museum.

660 W 400 N, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-2238, M-Su 9AM-3PM, though hours can vary and you are advised to confirm opening hours ahead of your arrival, \$5 park entrance fee.



Nations of the Four Corners Cultural Center

An outdoor museum with an extensive trail system leading to villages that represent the cultures that came together in this area: Navajo, Ute, Paiute, and Mexican explorers, and Latter-day Saint pioneers. Learn the rich heritage of historic cultures by visiting a Navajo (Dineh) hogan, Ute teepees, a traditional observation tower, prayer arch, and pioneer wagon and cabin.

461 W 500 S, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-4000 M-F 9AM-5PM

The Dinosaur Museum

See the world through the eyes of a dinosaur! Skeletons, eggs, footprints, and life-sized sculptures representing the dinosaurs from the Four Corners region and throughout the world allow you to learn why some dinosaurs lived only in specific areas. Explore an extensive collection of posters, props, and memorabilia from dinosaur and reptile-related movies, discover surprising facts about your favorite dinosaurs, and marvel at the 14-foot tall feathered Therizinosaurus, which boasts a 20-foot wingspan.

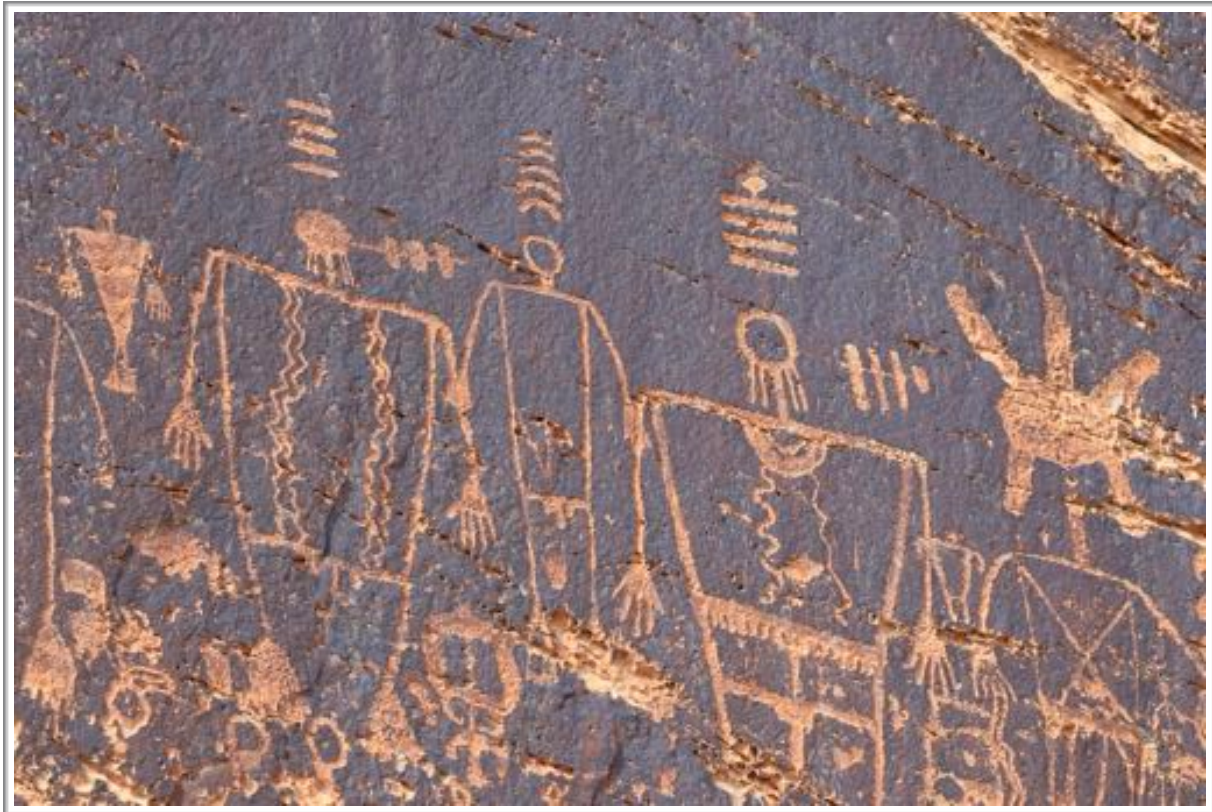
754 S 200 W, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-3454, April 15-October 15: M-Sa 9AM-2PM, Adults \$5.



Butler Wash Ruins

Along the eastern slope of Comb Ridge lies a small rock canyon that was once home to a small Ancestral Puebloan community. This cliff dwelling was likely built in the 1200's and a prime example of Mesa Verde-style construction. A 0.5 mile/ 0.8km trail leads to interpretive signs and a fenced observation point, though binoculars may be helpful to truly see the remarkable details of the ruins. The path to the overlook is well maintained but there are no facilities on site, and we suggest carrying drinking water during your walk through this desert environment.

The trailhead to the overlook is located off Utah 95 near mile marker 111. The parking area is on the north side of the road.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Stone Lizard Lodge 88 W Center St, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-3323 Quaint and homey rooms with hardwood floors, local artwork, free Wi-Fi, and appliances. Your stay comes with complimentary parking and a continental breakfast.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Patio Diner 95 N Grayson Pkwy, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-2177 Burgers, salads, loaded french fries, and milkshakes so thick they don't come with a straw.

Yak's Cafe 333 N Grayson Pkwy, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-2555 Come for the best breakfast in the Four Corners! Lunch dishes and seasonal, homemade desserts are also available.

Destination Awake Coffee & Bakery 87 S Main St, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-485-8102 Serving fresh donuts, muffins, cinnamon rolls, and other pastries, and a full espresso bar.

Destination Distinctive Shopping

Blue Mountain Trading Post 1930 S Main St, Blanding, UT 84511, 800-235-7687 Gift shop specializing in fine sterling silver jewelry from the Navajo, Hopi, and Zuni tribes, Navajo rugs and baskets, wood carvings, gold art, pottery, t-shirts, and other souvenirs.

Hunt's Trading Post 146 E Center St, Blanding, UT 84511, 435-678-7840 Family-owned since the 1900's and offering quality turquoise jewelry and Kokopelli coffee, some of the best espresso in Blanding!

DAY THREE

Natural Bridges National Monument

Three awe-inspiring natural bridges comprise this National Monument and International Dark Sky Park - Sipapu Bridge, Kachina Bridge, and Owachomo Bridge. Created by thousands of years of wind and water erosion, the largest bridge spans 268 feet/82 meters and soars 220 feet/61 meters over a canyon dotted with wildflowers. Also within the park is Horse Collar Ruin, one of the best-preserved ancestral Puebloan sites in the area and the perfect opportunity to wonder what life was like for the people who used to live here. The paved, one-way Bridge View Drive is a 9 mile/14.5km driving tour that takes you to the trailheads and overlooks of each bridge. The Natural Bridges Visitor Center offers exhibits, video presentations, a bookstore, water bottle filling station, and an impressive solar power field that powers all Park electricity.

Located 24 miles/38.6km west of Blanding on UT 275, 435-692-1234. Visitor Center open daily 9AM-4PM, Closed Tu-We in winter. \$20 per vehicle.



Kane Gulch Ranger Station

Find interpretive displays, photographs, videos, and drawings detailing prehistoric sites, rock art, and the work archeologists have done throughout the area. Rangers are also on hand to answer questions from geology to history and anything in between.

Located along UT 261, 4 miles/6.4km south of Highway 95. Rangers available 8AM-12PM, March 1-June 15 and Sept. 1-Oct. 31.

Muley Point Overlook

A scenic overlook providing stunning panoramic views of the southern Utah desert. From an elevation of over 6,000 feet/1829 meters above sea level, on a clear day you can view canyons unfolding into the Valley of the Gods, northern Arizona, and even Monument Valley and the San Juan River in the distance.

Located along Muley Point Rd., south of UT 261

Goosenecks State Park

Deep in the canyon below Goosenecks State Park, the San Juan River twists and turns as it makes its way westward to Lake Powell, leaving dramatic rock formations in its wake. This example of an entrenched river meander is one of the best in North America and can be seen in panoramic view from the banks of Goosenecks State Park. Fire rings, picnic tables, and vault toilets are available. Bring your own drinking water.

UT-316, Mexican Hat, UT 84531, 435-678-2238. Open daily, 24-hours. \$5 per vehicle.



Mexican Hat

This tiny village is known for a big rock - or more specifically, a large rock outcropping that, thanks to thousands of years of erosion, is shaped exactly like a sombrero perching on top of a pile of rocks. As a result of this geologic millinery, the town named itself Mexican Hat and frequently finds itself on lists of unusual place names in the United States. It's also a popular put-in/take-out location for San Juan River trips, and you might be lucky to catch sight of a rafting party or two as they navigate their way through the rushing waters. Other San Juan River sites include Sand Island, a put-in location near Bluff, and Clay Hills, a take-out spot.

Valley of the Gods

Discover isolated buttes, towering pinnacles, tilting mushroom rocks, colorful monoliths, and wide open vistas that last as far as the eye can see in this enchanting and scenic sandstone valley. A 17 mile/27km dirt and gravel road loops through the area and provides fantastic access to some of the best sights in southeast Utah. Located along Valley of the Gods Rd., north of UT 163. Open daily. Allow 1-2 hours to drive the full loop.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Hat Rock Inn 120 US-163, Mexican Hat, UT 84531, 435-683-2221 Casual rooms with free Wi-Fi, appliances, and river views. Amenities include complimentary parking, heated outdoor pool, hot tub, and access to hiking trails and beach.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Old Bridge Grille 2256 US-163 Scenic, Mexican Hat, UT 84531, 435-683-2322 Located in the San Juan Inn and featuring a full American menu as well as local Navajo dishes and a full bar.

The Swingin' Steak 2265 US-163, Mexican Hat, UT 84531, 435-683-2222 Featuring range-fed steak and burgers cooked in a custom-built grill that swings back and forth over an open fire. Grab a seat outdoors so you can watch your steak cook!

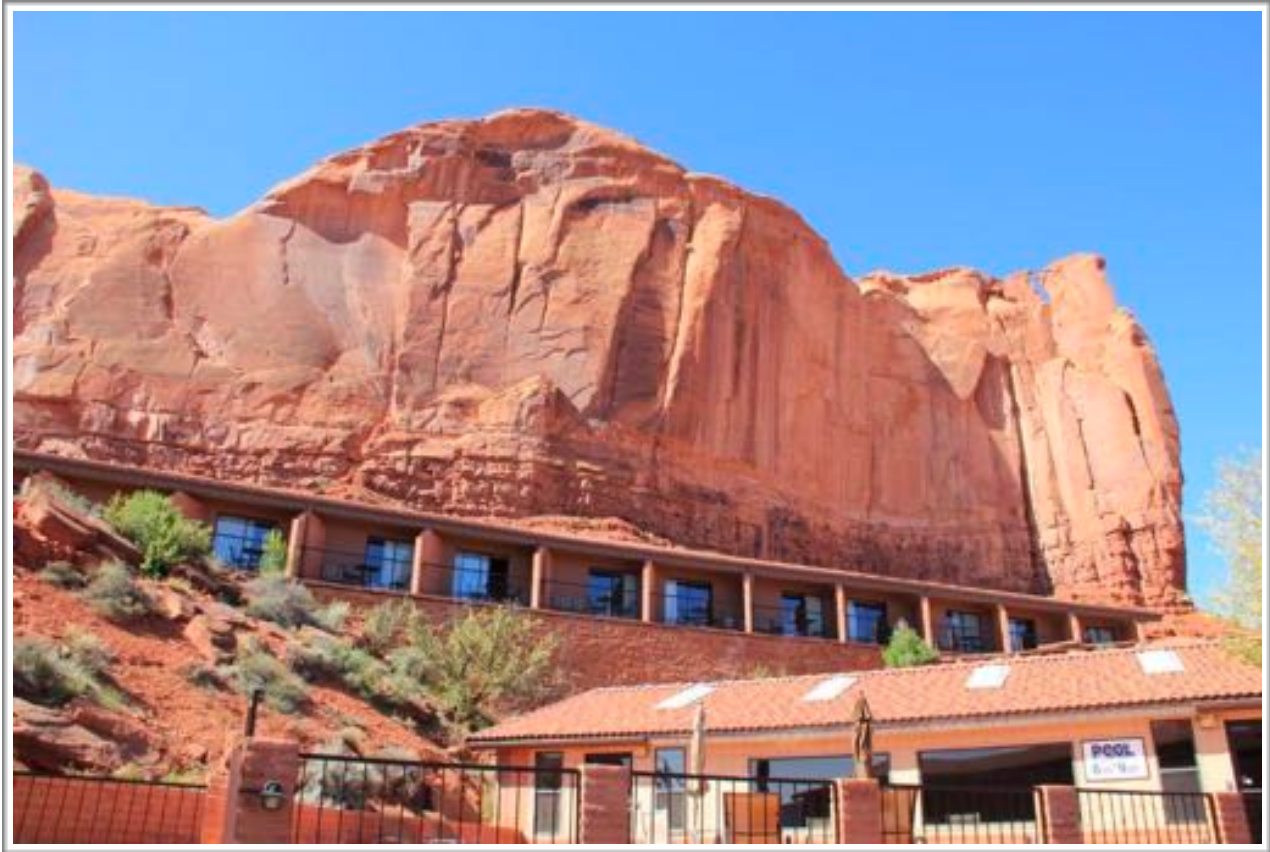
DAY FOUR

Monument Valley Navajo Tribal Park

In a remote area on the Utah/Arizona border lies one of the most majestic points on earth, where sandstone masterpieces soar hundreds of feet into the sky and puffy white clouds cast mesmerizing shadows against a striated desert floor. This is Monument Valley, a region of the Colorado Plateau within the Navajo Nation Reservation and home to rocky monoliths with names like The Mittens, Three Sisters, Totem Pole, and Ye Bi Chei. This park has also served as the backdrop of many famous cinematic moments, most notably in the Western movies by director John Ford. A 17 mile/27km looped driving route will provide excellent views of the parks' greatest sites, or you might choose to join a guided Jeep tour or horseback ride for access to valley landmarks such as Ear of the Wind, Mystery Valley, and Hunts Mesa. The Visitor Center offers tour meeting points, a gift shop, restroom facilities, and stunning panoramic views of Mitten Buttes and Merrick Butte. For a meal break, head to Stagecoach Restaurant located in the historic Goulding's Lodge, where you can feast on authentic southwestern and Navajo flavors, including some of the best Navajo Tacos in the Four Corners Region!

U.S. 163 Scenic, Oljato-Monument Valley, AZ 84536, 435-727-5870. Open daily, April-September 7AM-6PM, October-March 8AM-4PM. \$20 per vehicle.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Goulding's Lodge 1000 Gouldings Trading Post Rd, Oljato-Monument Valley, UT 84536, 435-727-3231. A stay at this sprawling desert property is a can't-miss experience! Offering endless red rock views of nearby Monument Valley along with laid-back rooms, an RV park and campgrounds, a heated indoor pool, gift shop and convenience store, Goulding's Trading Post Museum, Stagecoach Restaurant, and Earth Spirit Theater, where you can learn about sandstone structures, local Navajo culture, and watch a John Wayne movie every night.

DAY FIVE



Kayenta

Located entirely within Navajo Nation, this small town is known for its dramatic scenery, majestic desert landscapes, and three of the most famous eroded volcanic plug peaks in the West. Agathla Peak, just north of Kayenta, was named for the Navajo word meaning “much wool” due to the fur of antelope and deer that accumulates on the rock and is considered sacred by the Navajo. Church Rock, to the east of Kayenta, is a pillar that rises nearly 6,000 feet/1829 meters in the air, and discerning eyes will notice that Baby Rocks Mesa’s eroded walls resemble a group of children climbing to reach the top.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Blue Coffee Pot Restaurant US-160, Kayenta, AZ 86033, 928-697-3396 American, Native American, and vegetarian-friendly cuisine - a true hidden gem!

Wagon Wheel Restaurant Hwy 163 & 160, Kayenta, AZ 86033, 520-697-3221 Serving reasonably priced American and Native American breakfast and lunch.

Destination Distinctive Shopping

Navajo Arts and Crafts Enterprise Highway 160 & 163, Kayenta, AZ 86033, 928-697-8622 Authentic Navajo handmade goods including jewelry, rugs, apparel, and more.

Bluff

Many years ago, Ancestral Puebloans settled the area around what is now the town of Bluff. Their structures and influences are still found throughout the Colorado Plateau, and artifacts like rock art, ancient dwellings, and other relics help give clues as to how they lived within a harsh desert landscape. In the late 1800's, Mormon pioneers made a permanent settlement in Bluff in hopes of establishing a farming community along the San Juan River. Today, the city is known for its jaw-dropping landscape and as a prominent base for exploring southeastern Utah.

Bluff Fort Historic Site

In 1879-90, Mormon pioneers on assignment from their church built a wagon road throughout southern Utah. Their journey, known as the San Juan Expedition, was not easy however, as they encountered some of the harshest and most rugged terrain in the country. After six months of encountering a maze of canyons, mesas, and rocky cliffs, the exhausted settlers established Bluff Fort. The original site has since been restored, and one original cabin and an original wagon used in the expedition is on view, along with replicas of the Meetinghouse and Co-op Store. 550 Black Locust Ave, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-9995, Daily 9AM-6PM



Sand Island Petroglyphs

This impressive rock wall contains hundreds of ancient Ancestral Puebloans petroglyphs, or rock etchings, and is a fantastic introduction to Native American history and culture. It has been estimated that some of the images are nearly 3,000 years old and were intended to be viewed by everyone who gathered in the area.

The panel is on the National Register of Historic Places and is easily accessible via a short trail in the Sand Island Campground. See how many handprints, animals, hunters, and Kokopelli figures you can spot!

Located 4 miles/6.4km south on Bluff on UT 191, turn left at the sign for Sand Island.





Destination Distinctive Accommodations

Bluff Dwellings Resort & Spa 2625 US-191, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-2477 Warmly decorated rooms with patios offering stunning views of the surrounding sandstone cliffs. Restaurant, gym, spa, outdoor pool, hot tub, and fire pit on premises, along with access to hiking trails.

Destination Distinctive Dining

Comb Ridge Eat and Drink 680 Main St, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-487-8441 Burgers, sandwiches, salads, brick oven pizzas, and beer and wine with an outdoor patio for views of the beautiful surroundings.

Twin Rocks Cafe 913 East Navajo Twins Dr, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-2341 Local Navajo specialties, vegan and vegetarian-friendly meals, and beer and wine.

Destination Distinctive Shopping

Cow Canyon Trading Post 163 Mission Rd, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-2208 Selling traditional handicrafts made by local Navajo artists for over 30 years.

Bluff Art & Curiosity Shoppe 290 South 5th West Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-2300 A unique fine art gallery and gift shop with original Plein Air oil paintings of spectacular local landscapes and other crafts.

Twin Rocks Trading Post 913 Navajo Twins Dr, Bluff, UT 84512, 435-672-2341 Offers an extensive selection of museum quality, uniquely handcrafted Native American and Southwest art.

DAY SIX

Four Corners Monument Navajo Tribal Park

This is your chance to be in four different states at once! As the only point in the United States where four states meet, seeing this geographical oddity is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and makes for fantastic photos. An artisan market offers artwork and other souvenirs, but there is no gas station or convenience store nearby and bringing drinking water is strongly recommended.

597 NM-597, Teec Nos Pos, AZ 86514, 928-206-2540, April-September 8AM-5:45PM, October-March 8AM-4:45PM, \$5 per person.



Hovenweep National Monument

Over 10,000 years ago, nomadic Paleoindians roamed the Cajon Mesa in present-day southwest Colorado and southeast Utah to gather food and hunt game. By roughly 900 CE, these hunter-gatherers began to plant and harvest crops year-round instead of following the herds and seasons, settling what is now known as Hovenweep, a Paiute/Ute word meaning “deserted valley.” Portions of many towers, dwellings, kivas, and other structures built by these ancestral Puebloans can be seen throughout six protected villages spread over a 20 mile/32km expanse at this National Monument, allowing visitors to stand in awe at their skill and resourcefulness. The only way to see the structures is on foot via an extensive trail network that offers hikes of varying degrees of difficulty. We suggest beginning your journey at the Hovenweep Visitor Center where rangers can help determine which trail best suits your interests and abilities. Exhibits, a bookstore, restrooms, and a paved scenic overlook providing views of Little Ruin Canyon and several Square Tower Group structures are also available at the Visitor Center. Hovenweep Rd, Montezuma Creek, UT 84534, 970-562-4282 x5, Visitor Center Th-M 9AM-4PM.

